



User Guide



The myFreeSchoolMeals solution is produced and managed by LGSS and Firmstep.



LGSS is a partnership between Cambridgeshire County Council and Northamptonshire County Council to provide a range of business support services including IT, Finance, Legal, and HR to public sector organisations. www.lgss.co.uk



Firmstep is a solutions provider working with over 30% of UK Local Authorities helping them to engage with their communities, cut the cost of providing services, and meet central government targets, through the innovative use of web based technology. www.firmstep.com

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

myFreeSchoolMeals (myFSM) is a standalone web service providing an Online Free School Meals eligibility checking service that allows Free School Meals Providers (Local Authorities or Academies) to verify that Parent/Carers applying for FSM meet the eligibility criteria for entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM).

myFSM is linked to The Department for Education - Online Free School Meals eligibility checking service (ECS). ECS checks data from the department for Works and Pensions, the Home Office and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to establish FSM eligibility.

1.2 Document Purpose

The myFreeSchoolMeals User Guide describes the application process for Parent/Carers and FSM Providers using the myFSM site.

1.3 Other source of information

Further information for FSM Providers is provided in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

If you would like to find out more about the Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) services developed as part of the Connect Digitally programme, then visit the Connect Digitally Community available on the IDEa Communities of Practice website (www.communities.idea.gov.uk).

2 Guide to the Desktop Browser Interface

2.2 Accessing the Desktop Browser Interface

The myFSM desktop web interface is accessed via a desktop browser by entering the following address:

<https://myfreeschoolmeals.com>

This will take you to the default homepage (See Figure 2.1).

2.3 General Screen Layout

All pages in the myFSM interface have the same functional elements to maintain consistency in the browser experience.

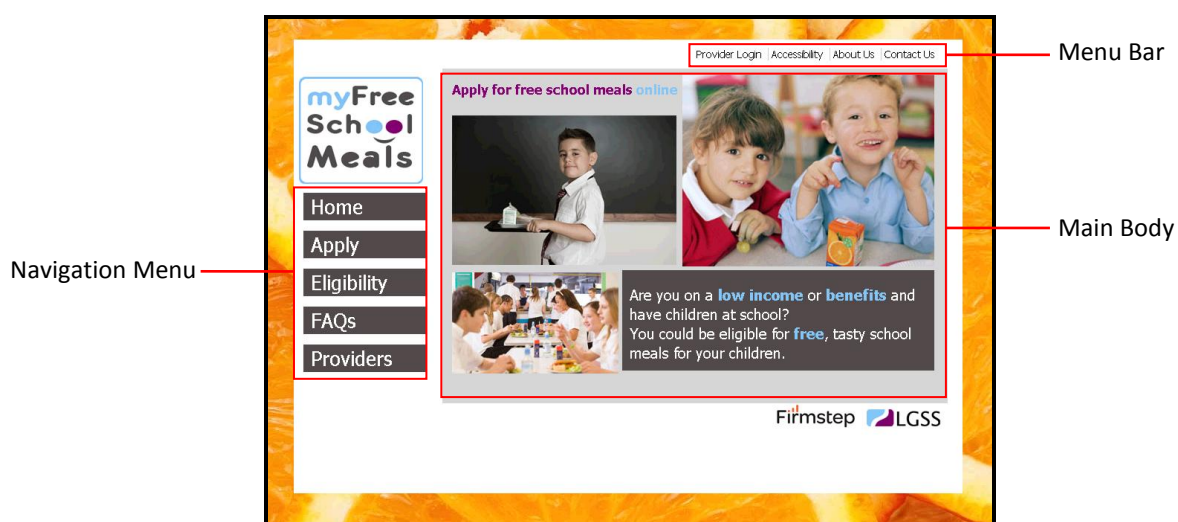


Figure 2.1

2.3.1 Menu Bar

Each page has a menu bar with links to the Provider Login, Accessibility, About Us and Contact Us pages.

2.3.2 Navigation Menu

Each page has a navigation menu with links for Returning to the Homepage, Applying for FSM, Eligibility criteria, FAQ's and a list of participating FSM Providers.

2.3.3 Main Body

The main body of the screen contains details of the page browsed to and differs depending on function selected.

2.4 Menu Bar

2.4.1 Provider Login

Clicking on this link takes you to the Provider Login page where FSM Providers can access the system to change passwords and view/download applications.

2.4.2 Accessibility

Clicking on this link takes you to a page detailing the options available to assist users with visual impairments or other special requirements to view the site.

2.4.3 About Us

Clicking on this link takes you to a page with details about LGSS and Firmstep.

2.4.4 Contact Us

Clicking on this link takes you to a page where you are able to complete an enquiry form requesting further details from the myFSM team. This is the main method for a Parent/Carer or FSM Provider to contact the myFSM team.

Go to section 4 of this guide for further information about the Contact Us function.

2.5 Navigation Menu

2.5.1 Home

Clicking on this button takes you back to the homepage.

2.5.2 Apply

Clicking on this button takes you to the page to apply for FSM. When the form is completed the Parent/Carer is advised of the outcome of the eligibility check.

Go to section 5 of this guide for further information about the Apply function.

2.5.3 Eligibility

Clicking on this button takes you to a page listing the current eligibility criteria in order for a Parent/Carer to receive FSM.

2.5.4 FAQ's

Clicking on this button takes you to a page listing the FAQs likely to be asked by Parent/Carers.

2.5.5 Applications (For FSM Providers only)

This button is only displayed if you are logged in. Clicking on the button takes you to a page where you can view and download FSM Applications.

3 Guide to the Mobile Browser Interface

3.1 Accessing the Mobile Browser Interface

The myFSM mobile interface is accessed via a mobile browser or device by entering the following address:

<https://myfreeschoolmeals.com>

This will take you to the default homepage (see Figure 3.1).

3.2 General Screen Layout

All pages in the mobile myFSM interface have the same functional elements to maintain consistency in the browser experience.

Not all the functions accessible in the Desktop interface are available when using the Mobile interface. The Mobile interface has been produced primarily for the Parent/Carer to use and doesn't have an option for FSM Providers to login and process applications.

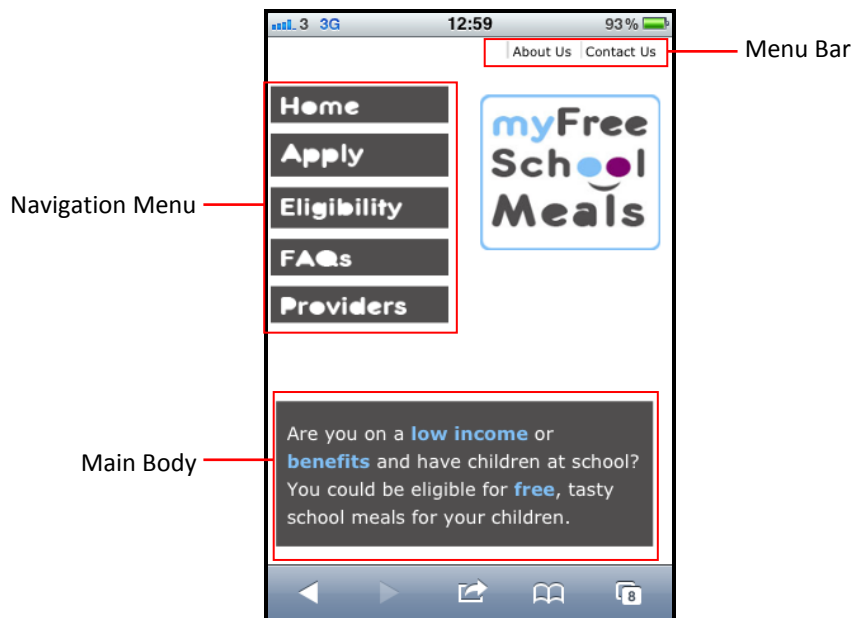


Figure 3.1

3.2.1 Menu Bar

Each page has a menu bar with links to the About Us and Contact Us screens.

3.2.2 Navigation Menu

Each page has a navigation menu with links for Applying for FSM, Returning to the Homepage, Eligibility criteria, FAQ's and a list of participating FSM Providers.

3.2.3 Main Body

The main body of the screen contains details of the page browsed to and differs depending on the function selected.

3.3 Menu Bar

3.3.1 About Us

Clicking on this link takes you to a page with details about LGSS and Firmstep.

3.3.2 Contact Us

Clicking on this link takes you to a page where you are able to complete an enquiry form requesting further details from the myFSM team. This is the main method for a Parent/Carer or FSM Provider to contact the myFSM team.

Go to section 4 of this guide for further information about the Contact Us function.

3.4 Navigation Menu

3.4.1 Home

Clicking on this button takes you back to the homepage.

3.4.2 Apply

Clicking on this button takes you to the page to apply for FSM. When the form is completed the Parent/Carer is advised of the outcome of the eligibility check.

Go to section 5 of this guide for further information about the Apply function.

3.4.3 Eligibility

Clicking on this button takes you to a page listing the current eligibility criteria in order for a Parent/Carer to receive FSM.

3.4.4 FAQ's

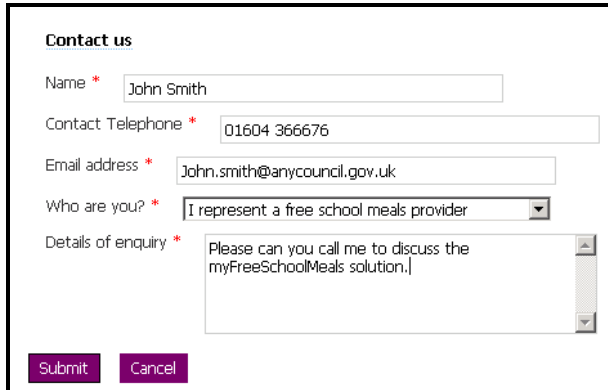
Clicking on this button takes you to a page listing the FAQs likely to be asked by Parent/Carers.

4 Contact Us

Browse to the myFSM web browser interface. The homepage is displayed and you should click on the **Contact Us** link in the Menu bar.

4.1 Contact Us Page

The **Contact Us** form is displayed (see Figure 4.1) with fields for entering users contact details, a drop down box for details about who you are and a free formatted text box to detail the reason for the inquiry.



The screenshot shows a web form titled "Contact us" with a blue underline. It contains the following fields and controls:

- Name ***: A text input field containing "John Smith".
- Contact Telephone ***: A text input field containing "01604 366676".
- Email address ***: A text input field containing "John.smith@anycouncil.gov.uk".
- Who are you? ***: A dropdown menu with the selected option "I represent a free school meals provider".
- Details of enquiry ***: A large text area containing the text "Please can you call me to discuss the myFreeSchoolMeals solution.".
- At the bottom left, there are two buttons: a purple "Submit" button and a purple "Cancel" button.

Figure 4.1

Once the form is completed the Parent/Carer or FSM Providers user clicks the Submit button to forward the enquiry to myFSM or clicks on the Cancel button to close the form.

5 Apply

Browse to the myFSM web browser interface. The homepage is displayed and you should click on the **Apply** button in the navigation menu.

The main body of the homepage is replaced with an Application form (see Figure 5.1). The form is split into four sections with each section having its own page. The four sections are; Start, School/Child, About You and Your Application. Each section can be accessed by clicking the section button; however you can only access a section if you have completed the previous sections. After all the sections are completed the eligibility check is performed and the Parent/Carer advised of the outcome.

5.1 Start Section

This is the start of the application process where the Parent/Carer must first identify how many schools they wish to apply for Free School Meals to and which benefits they are in receipt of.

The Parent/Carer must first select the number of different schools (maximum five) they wish to apply to from a drop down list. They are then required to identify which benefits they are currently in receipt of. If they select the option **None of the above** they are advised that it is unlikely they are eligible for FSM but should check with the Child(ren)s school.

The screenshot shows the 'Start' section of the application form. At the top, there are four tabs: 'Start' (highlighted in blue), 'School / Child', 'About You', and 'Your Application'. Below the tabs, the heading 'Start your application here' is followed by a paragraph explaining the process. A dropdown menu asks 'How many different schools do you need to apply for?' with '1' selected. Below this, a section titled 'Which of the following benefits apply to you or your partner?' lists several options with checkboxes. 'Income Support' is checked, while the others are unchecked. At the bottom, there are 'Next' and 'Cancel' buttons. A note at the bottom left states 'All fields marked with an asterisk * are mandatory'.

Start School / Child About You Your Application

Start your application here

Apply for free school meals for your children using this online form. We'll provide an immediate answer about your entitlement as you complete your application, but first we need to know which schools your children go to and confirm that they are setup to use this online service.

How many different schools do you need to apply for? *

Which of the following benefits apply to you or your partner? *

- ☒ Income Support
- ☐ Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- ☐ Child Tax Credit only (with a family income of less than £16,190 as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs)
- ☐ National Asylum Seekers Support
- ☐ Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit
- ☐ Employments and Support Allowance - Income Related only
- ☐ None of the above

All fields marked with an asterisk * are mandatory

Next Cancel

Figure 5.1

To move to the next section of the form (School/Child) the Parent/Carer clicks on the **Next** button. They also have the option to **Cancel** the form.

5.2 School/Child Section

In this the section the Parent/Carer records information about the child/children and which school(s) they attend.

5.2.1 Town/School Details

The Parent/Carer must first enter the town in which the Child(ren)s school is located. As they type letters into the input field the system generates a list of applicable towns (see Figure 5.2). Having clicked on the required town they must now find schools in that town by clicking the **Find schools** button.

Figure 5.2

Having selected the town the Parent/Carer must now enter the school. As they type letters into the input field the system generates a list of applicable schools (see Figure 5.3). Having clicked on the required school they must now check that the school is a participating member of the myFSM service by clicking the **Check schools** button.

Figure 5.3

If the selected school isn't a participating member of the myFSM service (see Figure 5.4) the Parent/Carer is advised that they can't proceed with their online application and should contact the school for further information about how to apply.

Figure 5.4

If the selected school is a participating member of the myFSM service (see Figure 5.5) the Parent/Carer is advised which FSM Provider is responsible for providing FSM and how long it will take for them to process the application. They will then be asked to enter details about the child/children attending that school. To add a child they must click the **Add Child** button.

School 1

What town is the school in? *

School *

Wooldale Road
Wootton Fields
NN4 6TP

School Information
This school is managed by Northamptonshire County Council who will process successful applications within 5 working days.

Children at Caroline Chisholm School

FORENAME*	SURNAME*	DATE OF BIRTH*	YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD*	OPTIONS
<input type="button" value="Add Child"/>				

Figure 5.5

5.2.2 Child Details

The Parent/Carer must enter details about each child attending the school they are submitting an application for (see Figure 5.6). To add the details entered they must click the **Add** button.

Child details

Forename *

Surname *

Date of Birth *

Your relationship to the child *

Figure 5.6

Having added the first child the Parent/Carer has the option to edit or remove the child by clicking the **Edit** or **Remove Child** buttons, or add another child for the same school by clicking the **Add Child** button (see Figure 5.7).

Children at Caroline Chisholm School

FORENAME*	SURNAME*	DATE OF BIRTH*	YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD*	OPTIONS
Adam	Jones	30 Jan 1997	Father	<input type="button" value="Edit"/> <input type="button" value="Remove Child"/>
<input type="button" value="Add Child"/>				

Figure 5.7

If the Parent/Carer previously selected to apply to more than one school they are required to enter the Town/School and child details as per the same format when they entered the details for the first child. This will be repeated for each of the schools the Parent/Carer is applying for Free School Meals.

If the Parent/Carer selected to apply for Free School Meals for only one school (or have entered details for all schools they are applying for Free School Meals) they are prompted to move to the next section of the form (About You) by clicking the **Next** button. They also have the option to go back to the previous section by clicking the **Previous** button or cancel the form by clicking the **Cancel** button.

5.3 About You Section

In this section the Parent/Carer provides personal details about themselves used to check their eligibility (see Figure 5.8). Parent/Carers are required to enter their name, date of birth, address, telephone number, email and either a national insurance or a national asylum seekers support number.

Now tell us about you

We need some basic details about you to confirm your eligibility for the scheme

Title *

First Name *

Surname *

Would you like to enter your address manually? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Postcode * [Find Address](#)

Choose Address *

Contact Telephone Number

Please tick this box if you would like a confirmation email ☒

Email

Date of Birth *

Please select which one of the following you hold *

☒ National Insurance Number

☐ National Asylum Seekers Support Number

National Insurance Number *

Figure 5.8

When entering address details the Parent/Carer has the option to enter their Postcode and select the address from a list (see Figure 5.9) or manually enter the address (see Figure 5.10).

Would you like to enter your address manually? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Postcode * [Find Address](#)

Choose Address *

Contact Telephone Number

Please tick this box if you would like a confirmation email ☒

Email

Date of Birth *

Please select which one of the following you hold *

☒ National Insurance Number

☐ National Asylum Seekers Support Number

National Insurance Number *

Figure 5.9

Would you like to enter your address manually? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Flat / House

Street *

Locality

Town

County

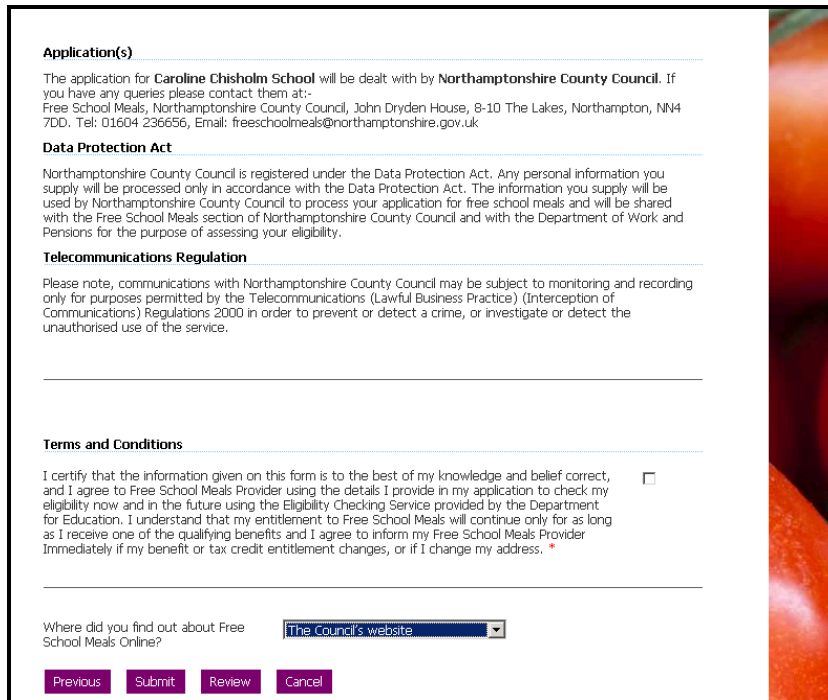
Postcode *

Figure 5.10

To move to the next section (Your Application) the user clicks on the **Next** button. They also have the option to go back to the previous section by clicking the **Previous** button or cancel the form by clicking the **Cancel** button.

5.4 Your Application Section

This is the final section of the Application form where the Parent/Carer is shown details of their application, advising which schools they have applied to and which FSM Providers will be processing the application (see Figure 5.11). Data Protection and Telecommunication Regulations are explained and they are required to confirm their acceptance of the Terms and Conditions. They are then asked to identify how they found out about FSM before they submit the application and their eligibility is checked.



The screenshot shows the 'Your Application Section' of the Free School Meals application form. It includes the following sections:

- Application(s)**: The application for **Caroline Chisholm School** will be dealt with by **Northamptonshire County Council**. If you have any queries please contact them at:- Free School Meals, Northamptonshire County Council, John Dryden House, 8-10 The Lakes, Northampton, NN4 7DD. Tel: 01604 236656, Email: freeschoolmeals@northamptonshire.gov.uk
- Data Protection Act**: Northamptonshire County Council is registered under the Data Protection Act. Any personal information you supply will be processed only in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The information you supply will be used by Northamptonshire County Council to process your application for free school meals and will be shared with the Free School Meals section of Northamptonshire County Council and with the Department of Work and Pensions for the purpose of assessing your eligibility.
- Telecommunications Regulation**: Please note, communications with Northamptonshire County Council may be subject to monitoring and recording only for purposes permitted by the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000 in order to prevent or detect a crime, or investigate or detect the unauthorised use of the service.
- Terms and Conditions**: I certify that the information given on this form is to the best of my knowledge and belief correct, and I agree to Free School Meals Provider using the details I provide in my application to check my eligibility now and in the future using the Eligibility Checking Service provided by the Department for Education. I understand that my entitlement to Free School Meals will continue only for as long as I receive one of the qualifying benefits and I agree to inform my Free School Meals Provider Immediately if my benefit or tax credit entitlement changes, or if I change my address. *
- Where did you find out about Free School Meals Online?**: The Council's website (selected from a dropdown menu)
- Buttons**: Previous, Submit, Review, Cancel

Figure 5.11

To submit the application the user clicks on the **Submit** button. They also have the option to go back to the previous section by clicking the **Previous** button or cancel the form by clicking the **Cancel** button.

5.5 Eligibility Check

After clicking the **Submit** button the Parent/Carer receives notification of their eligibility. The response will be either “Found and Eligible”, “Not Found” or “An Error”.

The user is provided with a reference number e.g. AF12345 which can be used to track their application. At this point the Parent/Carer has completed the application process and can either close the browser or click the **Continue** button which opens a Social Media page where the Parent/Carer can update their Twitter, Google+ or Facebook feeds.

If they have requested a confirmation email this will be sent to the email address provided.

If the eligibility check returns “Found and Eligible” (see Figure 5.12), the Parent/Carer is advised that the application will be passed to the Free School Meal Provider for them to process.

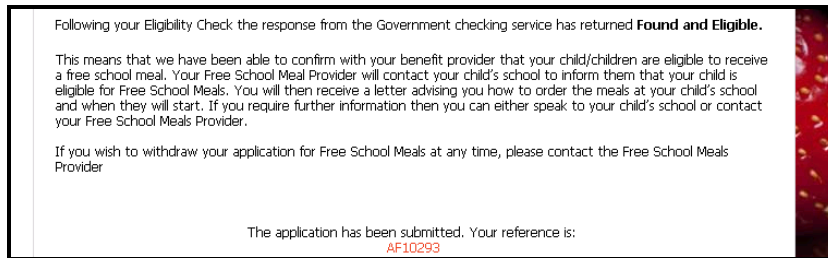


Figure 5.12

If the eligibility check returns “Not Found” (see Figure 5.13) the Parent/Carer is advised that the application has been unsuccessful as the system has been unable to confirm their eligibility with any of the benefit providers. If they believe they are entitled to FSM they are advised to contact their FSM Provider to discuss their application.

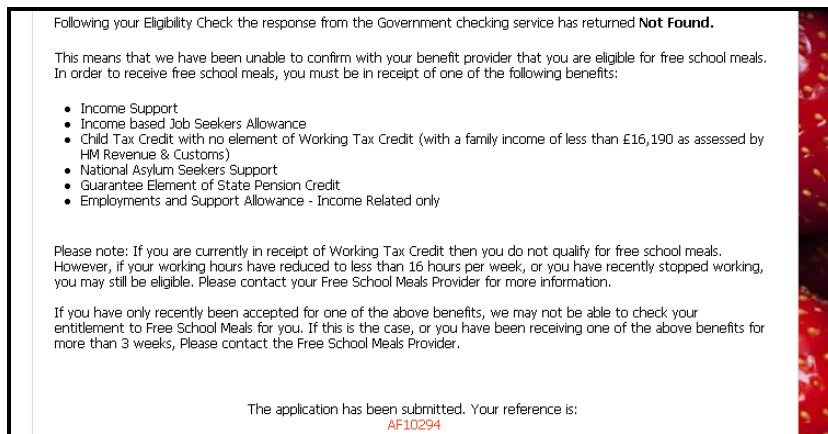


Figure 5.13

If the eligibility check returns “An Error” (see Figure 5.14), the Parent/Carer is advised that the application has been unsuccessful as the system has been unable to confirm their eligibility with any of the benefit providers. This is likely due to technical issues with myFSM and the Parent/Carer is asked to resubmit the application or to contact their FSM Provider for further advice.

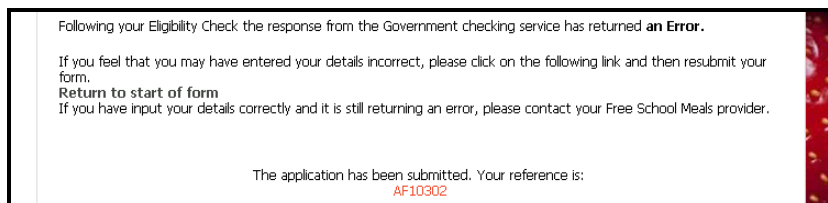


Figure 5.14

5.6 System Downtime

In the event that the System is unavailable a message will be displayed (see Figure 5.15) advising the Parent/Carer when to try again. This message is displayed once the Parent/Carer has identified which benefits they are in receipt of.

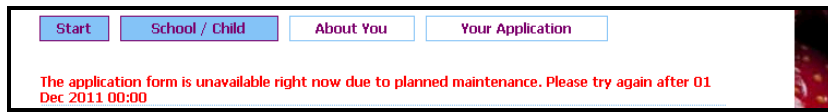


Figure 5.15

6 E-mails

If the Parent/Carer has ticked the box **Please tick this box if you would like a confirmation email**, then depending on the outcome of the eligibility check they will received a confirmation email.

The outcome of the eligibility check will be either “Found and Eligible”, “Not Found” or “An Error”. An E-mail message is generated for each of these outcomes and sent to the Parent/Carer.

Each E-mail includes the reference number e.g. AF12345 which can be used by the Parent/Carer and FSM Providers to track applications.

6.2.1 Found and Eligible E-Mail Message

From: myFreeSchoolMeals.com
To: thomas.jones@hotmail.com
Subject: Free School Meal Application Ref AF10293

Dear Mr Jones,

Following your Eligibility Check the response from the Government checking service has returned **Found and Eligible**. This means that we have been able to confirm with your benefit provider that your child/children are eligible to receive a free school meal. Your Free School Meal Provider will contact your child's school to inform them that your child is eligible for Free School Meals. You will then receive a letter advising you how to order the meals at your child's school and when they will start. If you require further information then you can either speak to your child's school or your Free School Meal Provider.

If you wish to withdraw your application for Free School Meals at any time, please contact your Free School Meal Provider

The application for **Campion School** will be dealt with by **Northamptonshire County Council**. If you have any queries please contact them at:- Free School Meals, Northamptonshire County Council, John Dryden House, 8-10 The Lakes, Northampton, NN4 7DD. Tel: 01604 236656, Email: freeschoolmeals@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Many thanks,

myFreeSchoolMeals
(please do not reply to this email address)

Figure 6.1

6.2.2 Not Found E-Mail Message

From: myFreeSchoolMeals.com
To: thomas.jones@hotmail.com
Subject: Free School Meal Application Ref AF10294

Dear Mr Jones,

Following your Eligibility Check the response from the Government checking service has returned **Not Found**. This means that we have been unable to confirm with your benefit provider that you are eligible for free school meals. In order to receive free school meals, you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit with no element of Working Tax Credit (with a family income of less than £16,190 as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs)
- National Asylum Seekers Support
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit
- Employments and Support Allowance - Income Related only

Please note: If you are currently in receipt of Working Tax Credit then you do not qualify for free school meals. However, if your working hours have reduced to less than 16 hours per week, or you have recently stopped working, you may still be eligible. Please contact us for more information.

If you have only recently been accepted for one of the above benefits, we may not be able to check your entitlement to Free School Meals for you. If this is the case, or you have been receiving one of the above benefits for more than 3 weeks, please contact the Free School Meals Provider.

The application for **Caroline Chisholm School** will be dealt with by **Northamptonshire County Council**. If you have any queries please contact them at:- Free School Meals, Northamptonshire County Council, John Dryden House, 8-10 The Lakes, Northampton, NN4 7DD. Tel: 01604 236656, Email: freeschoolmeals@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Many thanks,

myFreeSchoolMeals
(please do not reply to this email address)

Figure 6.2

6.2.3 An Error E-Mail Message

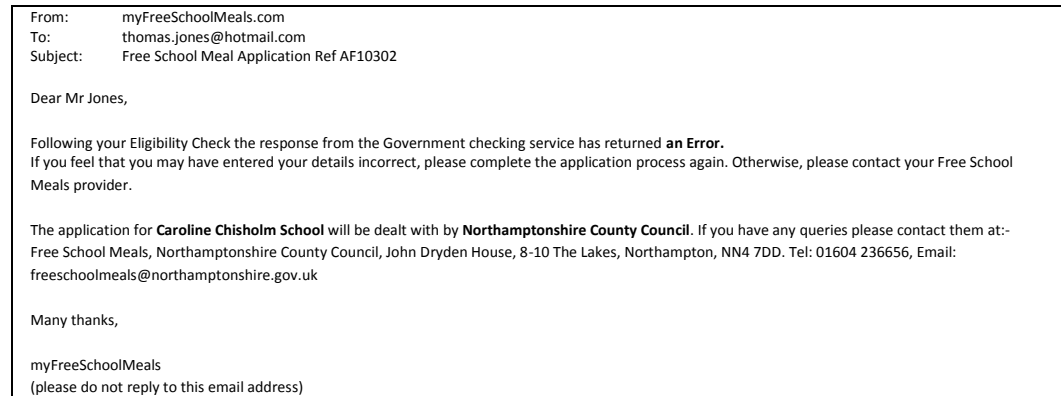


Figure 6.3